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Book Review

Qualitative Research in Education: Interaction and Practice

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The classic book, *Qualitative Research in Education: Interaction and Practice* (2003) published by Sage is one of the pioneering publications in the area of educational research, written by Professor Peter Freebody. The author has written a comprehensive book on the principles of qualitative approaches in educational research to get a holistic understanding of the phenomena of the research areas for practicing researchers in all fields, whose work, whether basic or applied, involves the struggle with actual qualitative data analysis issues. The researchers may include student researchers, faculty, especially novice or managers who are working with qualitative data and wish to apply research findings and rely on qualitative data information as a routine part of their work. The book as a result, guides the researchers at all levels pertaining to their views of the world, how to define research problems and interview questions, and introduce useful research frameworks.

The book is logically organized: it progresses from the basic to complex issues in qualitative research. Freebody has divided the book into nine chapters with a distinct organization pattern; starting with the relationship of education and research, then moving on to qualitative methods, conducting and analyzing interviews, and finally sharing with the readers the importance of conducting qualitative research. Each chapter starts with a brief and thought provoking introduction laying out the rationale, information about research, scope, and sequence of the chapters. The headings in the form of questions help readers reflect on their own situation at hand in order to pave a smooth path for the outcome of their research project. The content of the book can be easily searched by the table of contents section as well as the subsections given at the start of each chapter.

Chapters one to four are the foundation on which the book stands. They concentrate on introducing the readers to the interrelationship of research to education and succinctly explain how the concepts are applicable in the field of sociology as well. Chapter one explores the nature of educational practice and the role qualitative research has played and can play in education work. The author sets the base to define education through six preview scenes that serve as onion skins and keep on unfolding to show that education practices are nothing but social and cultural facts about the characteristics of learners and teachers, human development, families etc. The chapter tries to explain why and how education and educational research becomes part of cultural practice. The second chapter outlines the place of research in the overall efforts of the society and how public view research practices. This chapter addresses the following questions and begs to find answers through a summary of a study to exemplify observations on educational research in general and qualitative forms of research in particular:

1. Where did educational research come from as a public activity?
2. Why and where did it assume significance?
3. Why do educators typically do research?
4. How do the kinds of things researchers do arise from, relate to, or inform theories about society and education?

Chapter three explains the critical characteristics and associations of qualitative research and explores the nature of educational research and explores the nature of educational research. It also discusses the possible productive relationship between qualitative research and quantitative research and its distinction through transcripts. The next chapter introduces the readers to the varieties of qualitative research in education. The author explains that educational research is a practical activity and the practices are fundamentally about social relationships. Freebody argues that qualitative research is not less objective, empirical or rigorous than any other research in any discipline.

Chapter five introduces the case study method with a focus on ethnographic research in education. The chapter underlines in detail the procedure followed for case study methodology and also elaborates on action research and its focal position in education and points out variations and relationships among them.

The following chapter shows the importance of interaction in research and how turn-taking can be analyzed through eight transcript examples that are educationally relevant and rich with information followed by detailed explanation. According to the author, a language whether spoken or written is unambiguously or tacitly dialogical, that is, it addresses a person in its own thematic content. Language does oratorical and social work by producing a role-relationship between the author and the speaker or the reader and the hearer with degrees of formality and familiarity, authority and power, and discourse rights and commitments. It creates a world of value orientations, defining what is taken to be true or likely, good or desirable, important or obligatory.

Chapter seven deals with conducting and analyzing interviews in research. It makes the readers understand how people from different cultures draw on and rebuild their shared cultural knowledge and how responses through turn-taking can be treated as accounts. The author argues that linguistic and cultural meanings very often rely on the context, are researcher biased, and re contextualization of verbal data is a critical determinant of the information content of the data. This chapter also enables the interviewers to analyze their interviewing skills through in depth reflections so as to follow an acceptable procedure while conducting interviews and to identify problems and complexities encountered during the process.

The eighth chapter is the most useful and important chapter of the book. It discusses in detail the different crucial roles of textual materials in education and the various approaches to text analysis. The author emphasizes the fact that texts are artifacts that make representational claim on some aspect of reality and a principled un

derstanding of how it is that texts are selected, disseminated, and exchanged in and around educational activities. The chapter considers ways to understand and analyze texts used in the classroom and educational research and their implications for educational practice. Methods of analyzing the content, linguistic form and its function, genre and text organization, rhetoric, and the role of texts within activity systems are discussed.

Critique

Although many researchers, ranging from graduate students to PhD scholars struggling with their theses, work alone on their projects and focus on qualitative research too, data gathering and analysis has become more complex. This is due to multi-site multimedia studies and mixed method research that are emerging that combine qualitative and quantitative inquiry. Freebody's book cuts through the mysteries of qualitative research in education and provides a succinct and conceptual exposition of the qualitative research process, method, and tools. The book includes a broad range of real-life examples to describe and exemplify different methods through which educational data may be analyzed. Through an in-depth discussion and explanation, the reader is then directed towards workable methods and different ways their outcomes may be interpreted. The author has ensured to include minimal assumptions when explaining details relating to activities such as the use of transcripts, descriptions, and questions. Each transcript is followed by the authors' interpretation and at the same time leaves space for the readers to explore and arrive at conclusions. Thus, the author leaves no doubts in the minds of the readers on reading detailed descriptions. The questions are sequenced from general to specific and are candidly phrased and probably those that have been asked by many beginning researchers. Moreover, the book forces the readers to draw meaning from qualitative research data by using explicit methods of analysis that are practical, communicable, and non self-deluding.

For the convenience of the readers, the book uses a simple

tone and style of discussion that is conversational, non-intimidating, and at the same time formal and academic. The centerpiece and strength of this book is the inclusion of realistic and practical daily occurrence examples and transcripts from educational settings that demonstrate successful outcomes to make the concepts clear. From chapter five onwards, the author starts with why and what questions to introduce the topics, thus enabling the readers to reflect and set the base and scope of the chapters before proceeding to the main text. The questions for discussion, practical activities through transcripts, and discussion topics infused at the end of each chapter allow the readers to pause and reflect on the issues and contexts and relate them to their own situation through critical evaluation of their own planned research processes. It also gives an opportunity to the researchers to further their understanding of the concepts presented in each chapter. The author capitalizes on his practical experience to validate the conclusion section of each chapter very vividly and actually links the readers back to the original content of the chapter topic. This has further strengthened the credibility of the book.

While Freebody takes much effort to make 'Qualitative Research in Education: Interaction and Practice' interesting and stimulating; however, there is a lapse in incorporating some unsuccessful or not so successful research experiences in the form of transcripts which would have helped the researchers to understand the challenges that they could avoid. Secondly, although the examples given in the book are thought provoking and force the readers to reflect and recapitulate, the author would have done justice to include some examples from around the world as well instead of taking them mostly from Australia.

This is a compelling, comprehensive book that would respond to the needs of novice and experienced researchers in education alike. Both theory and practical aspects of research are equally incorporated in the book. Inclusion of relevant education and research theories, practical suggestions, and experience sharing rejuvenates the essence of the book and compels readers to finish the book to the

last word. The book is filled with useful tips and valuable ideas that would encourage the researchers to use qualitative approaches for educational research, put them at ease, and steer them through the storms of data collection and data analysis process. Freebody unlike some researchers, does not impose the theories of qualitative research on those who are not yet familiar with the intricacies of the research process. Instead, his book is full of practical advice and instructional ideas based on recent research. The strongest message that one can derive after reading the book is that one fit analysis of the methods given should not be applied rigorously, but that creation, testing, and revision of simple, practical, and effective analysis methods remain the highest priority for qualitative researchers.

Despite a few oversights, I would recommend the classic book 'Qualitative Research in Education: Interaction and Practice' by Peter Freebody to students at graduate and postgraduate levels as a sourcebook, or as a reference book in the courses on research methodology.